



**REPORT TO: EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES
COMMITTEE ON 24 NOVEMBER 2021**

**SUBJECT: INITIAL ATTAINMENT REPORT FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS
2021**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE: (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Committee of the SQA attainment across our secondary schools and for this data to be fully scrutinised as part of our raising attainment improvements and strategy.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (D) (1) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to all the functions of the Council as an Education Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) **scrutinise and note the Senior Phase Attainment across our Secondary Schools for session 2020/21 and notes the initial processes in preparation for exams in session 2021/22;**
- (ii) **note that initial school based attainment meetings took place in August and September 2021 and actions for improvement were noted during Alternative Certification Model Quality Assurance and Data Meetings during March to June 2021;**
- (iii) **acknowledge and commend practitioner commitment, extensive preparation and support of young people throughout the session as well as young people's resilience and dedication throughout last session's Alternative Certification Model period; and**
- (iv) **note that a follow up report on Insight measures will be reported to Committee in January 2022 which will be informed by further**

Insight attainment meetings with schools taking place during November and December 2021.

3. BACKGROUND

SQA Attainment – Session 2020/21

- 3.1 Following continued disruption due to the Covid-19 public health emergency, the Deputy First Minister announced cancellation of National 5 examinations for 2021 and requested that SQA develop an Alternative Certification Model (ACM) to replace 2021 exams for National 5. This was to be based on teacher judgement and supported by assessment resources and quality assurance instead of a final examination based assessment process.
- 3.2 On 8 December 2020, the Deputy First Minister further announced the cancellation of 2021 exams for Higher and Advanced Higher, and instructed SQA to extend the 2021 ACM to Higher and Advanced Higher.
- 3.3 From the start of Term 3 in January 2021, a second period of National lockdown commenced following the announcement by Scotland's First Minister on 19 December 2020 due to impact of Covid-19. In January 2021, online learning and Remote Learning approaches were re-established across all schools alongside childcare provision for critical key workers and identified vulnerable children and Additional Support Needs (ASN) pupils across all of the schools in Moray.
- 3.4 Return of some Senior Phase (S4-S6) learners to our school buildings in support of practical based subjects was provided in line with Scottish Government guidance and mitigations from early March 2021. This enabled completion of practical work which could not be undertaken at home. SQA following advice from the National Qualifications 2021 group revised guidance on course content and assessment, further removing requirement for submission of coursework as part of evidence requirement for SQA courses.
- 3.5 For session 2020/2021, provisional results were shared with learners by schools in advance of the 25 June deadline for initial result submission to SQA. Subsequently, SQA progressed with formal certification of these results as scheduled on 10 August 2021 with further opportunity as required for appeals of which few were submitted for Moray learners due to rigour of the ACM quality assurance process in place across Moray schools.
- 3.6 For learners in S5 and S6, session 2020/2021 is the second year of disruption faced by them in relation to their schooling and to the SQA examination system with move to an ACM. Learners in S4, S5 and S6 have not yet participated in an examination diet or related experience (e.g. in-school preliminary examinations or 'prelims') as was in place prior to session 2019/2020. As noted nationally, many young people have reported their mental health and wellbeing has been adversely impacted as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, where schools have continued focus on supporting and monitoring wellbeing while also aiming to raise attainment and achievement for all in a very different school experience. Increased anti-social behaviour

has also arisen in certain localities involving some young people, with increase in exclusion across some schools.

- 3.7 The Insight data we receive each year for cohort attainment across S4, S5 and S6 performance will be reported up to next Committee following Secondary School Insight Attainment reviews in November/December 2021. This will provide a further holistic approach to attainment and performance and allows comparison with virtual comparators and on a national basis allowing analysis of the following:
- Improving attainment in Literacy and Numeracy
 - Improving attainment for all
 - Increasing post-school destinations
 - Tacking disadvantage by improving the attainment of lower attainers relative to high attainers
- 3.8 Initial Senior Phase Attainment meetings have taken place with secondary schools to analyse the SQA performance data and to set actions for improvement appropriate to all schools on an individual basis. Final meetings occurred in August and September 2021 with previous ACM Quality Assurance and Data Meetings taking place during March to June 2021 analysing data sets forming the basis for this report, now in final format.
- 3.9 The attainment data presented to Committee within this report is collated from SQA results across the Senior Phase and will cover the following:
- S4 breadth and depth attainment at SCQF level 5
 - S5 breadth and depth attainment at SCQF level 6
 - S6 breadth and depth attainment at SCQF levels 6 and 7
 - Overview of subject performance
 - Attainment in senior phase from courses provided through UHI, Moray College
- 3.10 Our Best Value Audit Report for Moray highlighted scope for improvement in levels of attainment for a number of measures; this was extracted from our attainment data for session 2017/18. Within this Committee report, data from 2017/18 is noted along with data from 2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21 in order to demonstrate progress made to date as well as actions that are planned for improvement. It is further noted that attainment data for session 2019/20 and 2020/21 have very different assessment processes and educational environment to previous sessions when arriving at final grades, making 'like for like' comparisons difficult.
- 3.11 Committee should also be aware that over the course of session 2020/21 there was significant disruption to learning. The 'new' timetable did start early during the first lockdown however learning was being undertaken remotely and approaches to remote learning, including roll out of devices were in the early stages. S4 learners in particular were not used to timed in-class assessments during August to December – this time was identified as a key opportunity to cover as much content as possible. In normal sessions prelims

would take place in January, however they did not take place due to the second lockdown and examinations had already been cancelled. As a result young people had limited opportunities to undertake controlled assessments under examination conditions until they returned to school in April 2021. Although the period for gathering evidence was extended, some young people will have found this a particularly anxious time.

4 **SENIOR PHASE ATTAINMENT ANALYSIS OVERVIEW**

S4 Breadth and Depth attainment at SCQF Level 5

- 4.1 This measures how many qualifications S4 learners achieved at all SCQF level 5 qualifications; this included National 5 as well as others, including Skills for Work and National Progression Awards at level 5.

Moray	2018	2019	2020	2021
1 @ Level 5	75.7%	78.6%	82.3%	81.7%
3 @ Level 5	52.2%	55.0%	61.4%	61.4%
5 @ Level 5	30.9%	32.5%	39.2%	37.0%
6 @ Level 5	20.8%	20.5%	27.8%	25.9%
7 @ Level 5	0.0%	0.1%	9.4%	19.5%

Source: SEEMIS BI B&D data

- 4.2 In session 2021 - following improvement across all measures in 2020 - marginal decreases are noted at 1, 5 and 6 at level 5 measures with the 3 at level 5 measure comparable to session 2020. The largest reduction of 2.2% (5 @ level 5 from 39.2% in 2020 to 37.0% in 2021) of an S4 cohort size of 922 young people in 2021, represents a slight notional decrease of 20 pupils not achieving at this measure. The trend for attainment of 6 and 7 qualifications at level 5 first reported in session 2020 shows a positive position with 6 of our 8 schools (increased from 4 in session 2020) now presenting a number of pupils for 7 qualifications at level 5. As a result we have the emergence of a strong performance for this measure, increasing to 19.5% or an additional 180 learners based on 2021 cohort size of 922 young people achieving 7 qualifications this session at level 5.
- 4.3 Work continues with all schools to ensure more pupils across have the opportunity to undertake 7 and more level 5 qualifications in S4 with this initially being for Application of Maths but will extend to other subject areas as appropriate. We continue to review approaches in line with recent OECD reports relating to the review of Curriculum for Excellence into the future and work underway on review of Senior Phase qualifications following the Stobart report on upper-Secondary education student assessments and National reviews underway.
- 4.4 Our targets against actual outcomes at level 5 for session 2020/21 are as follows:

Moray	Target - 2021	Actual - 2021	Variance
1 @ Level 5	85.0%	81.7%	-3.3%
3 @ Level 5	65.0%	61.4%	-3.6%

5 @ Level 5	42.0%	37.0%	-5.0%
6 @ Level 5	31.0%	25.9%	-5.1%
7 @ Level 5	15.0%	19.5%	+4.5%

- 4.5 The targets above were set in line with our Raising Attainment Strategy, virtual comparator data as well as national trends and were developed with progress and potential constraints and uncertainty associated with Covid-19 known at the time of setting in August/September 2020. Where the pandemic has continued to impact on learners and our schools throughout the months following in session 2020/2021, review of all targets is now required in order to take account of further impact on young people due to Covid-19.
- 4.6 The highest positive variance (7 @ level 5) of 4.5% notionally equates to 41 learners, with largest adverse variance (6 @ level 5) of 5.1% equivalent to 47 learners, based on 2021 S4 cohort size of 922 young people. Further moderate variances are noted in the end column above with work underway to review targets in line with exceptional circumstances continuing to be faced by our schools as we continue to navigate through the pandemic along with necessary restrictive mitigations in place to ensure safety of all.

S5 Breadth and Depth attainment at SCQF Level 6

- 4.7 This measure demonstrates how many qualifications S5 learners achieved at SCQF level 6; this includes Highers as well as other qualifications, including Skills for Work and National Progression Awards at level 6.
- 4.8 This data is based upon the S4 cohort numbers who continue to S5 and is not for all pupils who were still in school for S5. This is a normal measure for measuring performance with SQA qualifications.

Moray	2018	2019	2020	2021
1 @ Level 6	53.7%	46.0%	56.8%	57.3%
3 @ Level 6	33.8%	27.5%	33.4%	36.4%
5 @ Level 6	13.9%	11.7%	13.3%	15.0%

Source: SEEMIS BI B&D data

- 4.9 There is an improving trend at all levels for 1, 3 and 5 passes at level 6. The largest increase (3 @ level 6) of 3.0% of a cohort size of 913 young people when this S5 cohort were in S4, represents an increase of 27 pupils achieving at this measure.
- 4.10 S5 attainment has continued to be an area of focus across Moray and is supported through our ongoing review of the curriculum provision at SCQF level 6 across our schools to ensure that we provide a responsive and appropriate offer for all learners. Common with S4, further cognisance of OECD reviews and National advice to follow will be taken in consideration of further work in this respect.
- 4.11 Our S5 targets against actual outcomes at level 6 for session 2020/21 are as follows:

Moray	Target - 2021	Actual – 2021	Variance
1 @ Level 6	61.0%	57.3%	-3.7%
3 @ Level 6	36.0%	36.4%	+0.4%
5 @ Level 6	16.0%	15.0%	-1.0%

- 4.12 The targets above were set in line with our Raising Attainment Strategy, virtual comparator data as well as national trends. However, they were reviewed in August/September 2020 at a time when the potential constraints, impact and uncertainty associated with Covid-19 were not fully known. The pandemic has continued to impact on learners and our schools throughout the months following in session 2020/2021 and review of all targets will be required in order to take account of further impact on young people due to Covid-19.
- 4.13 With cohort size of 913 young people when this S5 cohort were in S4, the variance of -3.7% for 1 at level 6 represents a notional 34 pupils not achieving in line with target at this measure.
- 4.14 Positive trend data year on year is however noted in the table further above, highlighting demonstrable improvement in performance with target review required as we continue to navigate through the pandemic along with necessary restrictive mitigations in place to ensure safety of all. This is commendable given pressure young people have been under and considerable work undertaken by staff to support positive outcomes.

S6 Breadth and Depth attainment at SCQF Levels 6 and 7

- 4.15 This measures how many qualifications S6 learners achieved SCQF level 6 and 7 qualifications; this includes Highers and Advanced Highers as well as others, including Skills for Work and National Progression Awards at level 6 and 7. This is an accumulation of level 6 and 7 attainment which may have been achieved prior to S6 within the Senior Phase. Similarly, to S5 performance, we are continuing to develop the curricular offer for S6 pupils.
- 4.16 This data is based upon the S4 cohort numbers who continue to S6 and is not for all pupils who were still in school for S6.

Moray	2018	2019	2020	2021
3 @ Level 6	38.1%	42.2%	37.9%	44.8%
5 @ Level 6	25.2%	26.9%	26.1%	28.9%
1 @ Level 7	17.6%	16.5%	18.6%	20.8%

- 4.17 Our S6 attainment is favourable and positive across achievement of both 3 and 5 qualifications at SCQF level 6. Young people achieving at least 1 Advanced Higher is further displaying an improving trend. Performance in 2021 is strongest of all four years across all three key measures reported for S6. The largest increase (3 @ level 6) of 6.9% of a cohort size of 876 young people when this S6 cohort were in S4, represents a notional increase of 60 pupils achieving at this measure. Common with S5, there remains further

work to be undertaken with the S6 curriculum offer and demonstrated attainment.

- 4.18 Our S6 targets against actual outcomes at level 6 and 7 for session 2020/21 are as follows:

Moray	Target - 2021	Actual – 2021	Variance
3 @ Level 6	44.0%	44.8%	+0.8%
5 @ Level 6	30.0%	28.9%	-1.1%
1 @ Level 7	20.0%	20.8%	+0.8%

- 4.19 The targets above were set in line with our Raising Attainment Strategy, virtual comparator data as well as national trends. However, they were reviewed in August/September 2020 at a time when the potential constraints, impact and uncertainty associated with Covid-19 were not fully known. The pandemic has continued to impact on learners and our schools throughout the months following in session 2020/2021 and review of all targets will be required in order to take account of further impact on young people due to Covid-19. With cohort size of 876 young people when this S6 cohort were in S4, the variance of -1.1% for 5 at level 6 represents a notional 10 pupils not achieving in line with target at this measure. Positive variances for 3 at level 6 and 1 at level 7 of 0.8% represents a notional 7 pupils achieving above target in respect of each measure.

Actions for Improvement for Breadth and Depth Attainment

- 4.20 A range of actions for improvement have been put in place to further improve our breadth and depth attainment following data and trend analysis and secondary school attainment meetings. These will be monitored and followed up by central officers on a school by school basis throughout the session.
- Cohort and group based tracking and monitoring to support interventions for improved attainment including increased rigour in tracking of subject levels and completion
 - Increased focus on target setting through Universal Pupil Support interventions, department meetings and school based attainment meetings
 - In-service focus in November on Covid-19 recovery, maximising attainment and readiness and responsiveness for SQA exam diet 2022. This includes delegation to schools to make full use of the local authority identified November Inset day to focus on related activities and emerging priorities identified
 - Authority-wide focus on high quality learning and teaching, continuing to embed Our Moray Standard and supporting resources across all schools
 - Ongoing review of our Moray Raising Attainment Strategy, Toolkit and Practitioner Guide including target setting in line with continued impact of Covid-19 pandemic
 - Review of curricular provision including range and number of qualifications on offer to support all learners using consortia approaches as well as virtual solutions in line with OECD reports and National advice

- Provision of study support at school level as well as continued signposting to national support through eSgoil supported study sessions available virtually
- Use of Covid-19 recovery funding to enable universal and targeted interventions with a wider range of staff focused on raising attainment, supporting wellbeing and ensuring equity for all across our secondary schools. This includes key literacy and numeracy interventions as well as wider accreditation options supported through additional staff in roles including Teacher of Intervention, Principal Teacher (Alternative Curriculum), Principal Teachers (Raising Attainment) to help reduce the impact of Covid-19

Subject Performance at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Level

- 4.21 At National 5 level, from the 35 subjects presented across Moray schools, the average pass rate for S4 pupils was 90%; this is a decrease of 1% from 2020. Within our schools this ranged from 81% to 93%.
- 4.22 At National 5, strong S4 performance is noted in Art and Design, Geography, History, Modern Studies, Music and Physical Education. National 5 English also continues to be an area of positive attainment with an increasing trend common with National 5 Maths.
- 4.23 At Higher Level, from the 32 subjects presented, the average pass rate for S5 pupils was 90%; ranging from 85% to 95% across our schools. This is an increase of 1% from 2020.
- 4.24 Positive subject performance at S5 for Higher includes Art and Design, Business Management, English, History, Modern Studies, Music and Physical Education with notable increase in attainment overall for Higher Maths.
- 4.25 In S6 for Higher, the pass rate remained high at 88% with notable subject performance in Geography, History, Modern Studies and Physical Education. At S6 Advanced Higher, performance was strong in a number of subject areas which include English, French, Geography, Graphic Communication, History, Music and Physical Education and a highly notable number of pupils achieving at least one Advanced Higher at 40% of the S6 cohort.
- 4.26 Subject performance has been reviewed at school and local authority level and support and challenge arrangements continue to be under review for ongoing subject group meetings as we prepare for the expectations and requirements for SQA Exam Diet 2022.

Actions for Improvement for Subject Based Attainment

- 4.27 A range of actions for improvement continue to further improve our attainment and estimate rigour. These will be monitored and reviewed by central officers throughout the session as well as by school senior leaders.
- Continued support of subject group meetings to support assessment and moderation, dissemination of good practice and shared learning
 - School based department attainment meetings, some of which supported by central officers

- Familiarisation with National 5 assessment and moderation requirements and school and authority processes to support this
- SQA Understanding Standards and associated webinars
- Higher and Advanced Higher assessment changes and associated changes to learning and teaching approaches
- To continue to review and update where necessary, school and authority quality assurances process during session 2021/22
- Continued contingency planning and preparation in the event of disruption to the 2022 examination diet, based on emerging intelligence and advice

4.28 Moray College continues to provide a range of qualifications for senior phase pupils at National 5 and Higher level as well as Skills for Work (SfW) courses and National Progression Awards (NPA) at levels 4 and 5. The SfW and NPA course provide a high proportion of passes and this supports continued engagement with the college post school as well as links to apprenticeship programmes. At National 5 and Higher level the performance is noted below for A-C passes for 2018 - 2021:

	2018	2019	2020	2021
	A-C	A-C	A-C	A-C
H ESOL	100%	80%	100%	100%
H Psych	70%	40%	74%	93%
H Sociology	31%	50%	100%	100%
H Human Biology				82%
N5 ESOL	100%	75%	100%	86%
N5 Practical Cookery			90%	
N5 Psychology	82%	70%	86%	77%
N5 Sociology				67%

4.29 National 5 attainment is broadly in line with previous years noting small presentation numbers and fluctuation in trend over time; 2021 saw an improvement in H Psychology with a decline in numbers presented noted. Pass rate in National 5 Sociology lower than anticipated based on other pass rates. Results continue to be discussed and reviewed in partnership with Moray College link officers for ensuring best outcomes for our Moray learners.

Actions for Improvement for Moray College Attainment

4.30 As stated, the attainment for Skills for Work and National Progression Awards continues to be positive for Moray senior phase learners, however a range of actions for improvement have been put in place to further improve National Qualification attainment at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher level. These will continue to be monitored and followed up by the local authority Moray College link working with Moray College link officers throughout the session.

- Moray College link officers meetings with local authority link officer and school DHTs with College oversight to ensure timely interventions/support for emerging issues
- Enhanced College tracking and monitoring processes shared regularly with each school, developed in partnership with the local authority

- Regular discussions regarding early warning and interventions for pupils as required
- Mid-session progress meeting with local authority and Moray College link officers regarding attainment and outcomes
- Further extension of partner offer to include eSgoil and the Northern Alliance

5 SENIOR PHASE SQA EXAM PROCESSES FOR 2021/2022

- 5.1 On 18 August 2021, it was announced by the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills that examinations will be held for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher Courses for session 2021/2022. This decision was informed by the views of stakeholders including the National Qualifications Group, and by public health advice at that time. SQA examinations will take place from 26 April 2022 to 1 June 2022 with plans dependent on level of any further disruption due to Covid-19 and any additional measures that may be required by that time to respond to any further disruption to learning or changes to public health conditions that may occur. In Moray, we continue to build on the good practice across schools with SQA coordinators working closely with the local authority SQA lead to ensure pupils and staff are supported in delivery and assessment preparation.
- 5.2 Modifications to assessment requirements for National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher courses have already been announced by SQA to support reduction in the volume of assessment and ensure learners continue to achieve credible qualifications. For most courses, these modifications remain the same as those that were put in place for session 2020/2021.
- 5.3 While SQA continue to plan towards the running of a full SQA examination diet this session, if there is further significant disruption to learning and teaching beyond that experienced in 2020/2021, appropriate additional support measures will be put in place by SQA to ensure that exams can still go ahead. For some courses, this may include for example, advance notice of some topics which may feature in exams.
- 5.4 In the event of significant changes to public health conditions at exam time – for example, where public health advice means that large gatherings of people are no longer permitted in April to June leading to severe exam disruption or cancellation – SQA will ask teachers to use their professional judgement of assessment evidence gathered to determine learners' grades based on work already completed throughout the year. Our teachers will continue to gather examples of learners' work and keep records of assessments (e.g. class tests, practical performances, prelims) as evidence of challenge, integration and application of key knowledge and skills required by National courses at National 5, Higher and Advanced Higher. This will provide a reliable collection of evidence which may be used in the event that exams were cancelled at short notice and teachers were required to determine grades achieved.
- 5.5 Through Universal Pupil Support, PSE and other schools based approaches, teachers continue to support young people in preparation for the examination diet planned by SQA for this session. Schools are supporting all pupils in S4-

S6, many having not yet sat a formal examination due to the Alternative Certification Model approaches in place during session 2019/2020 and 2020/2021. Sincere gratitude is expressed to all Moray secondary schools and practitioners in supporting our young people to maximise their achievement and attainment.

6 SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The Policy was informed by the priorities within the Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan and in particular to Ambitious and Confident Children and Young People and A Growing and Diverse Economy.

b) Policy and Legal

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

c) Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

d) Risk Implications

There are risk implications as to how this attainment dataset will continue to be used as comparator data for the next 3-5 years and may skew future performance reporting. The data presented herein reflects year 2 of an Alternative Certification Model (ACM) differing to the previous session's ACM, with planned reversion to a final examination diet this session.

There is also the consideration that more young people will continue to stay on at school beyond S4 and S5 due to coronavirus pandemic and the associated uncertainty. Likewise, concerns regarding wellbeing and Mental Health and impact on learner outcomes and attainment.

Schools further note increases in Additional Support Needs among pupils, impacting on number of courses studied and levels of study. This has noted impact on attainment measures outlined above and is anticipated to increase based on Broad General Education cohort information. A number of young people, due to their additional support needs, access a personalised curriculum with individual targets and outcomes.

Uncertainty surrounds potential change as a result of the unknown direction of the Covid-19 pandemic as outlined in section 5 above with two further contingency scenarios outlined beyond the identified examination based diet return this session.

All of the above are likely to have an effect on SQA results and overall performance data in future years. Changes in assessing qualifications in 2020 and 2021 as a result of cancellation of examinations as well as uncertainty continuing this session creates risks relating to accountability and data comparability.

e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications arising directly from this report.

f) Property

None.

g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

An Equality/Socio Economic Impact Assessment is not required as this report is to inform Committee on performance.

h) Consultations

Senior Officers in Education, Communities and Organisational Development, Paul Connor, Principal Accountant, Equal Opportunities Officer, Human Resources Manager, Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer have been consulted and are in agreement with the contents of this report as regards their respective responsibilities.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Committee is asked to acknowledge work underway in order to prepare young people for examinations across Moray Schools during the continued Covid-19 pandemic and associated uncertainty**
- 6.2 The Committee is invited to consider and note the SQA assessment process in preparation for the full 2021 attainment report to be presented at the next Committee meeting**
- 6.3 The Committee is asked to consider the potential impact on examinations and performance for session 2021/2022**

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Background Papers:

Ref: SPMAN-1315769894-180